

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 8619

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS IR

SUBJ: UNREST AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

SUMMARY: INTERMITTENT STUDENT UNREST IN SEVERAL UNIVERSITIES IN TEHRAN HAS CHARACTERIZED PAST SEVERAL DAYS. CAMPUS TROUBLES AT THIS TIME OF YEAR HAVE BECOME TRADITIONAL BUT DISTURBANCES THIS YEAR SEEM MORE SERIOUS THAN THOSE FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. END SUMMARY.

BEGINNING SEVERAL DAYS AGO AND CONTINUING ON DECEMBER 3, 4, 5, AND 6 STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF DISSIDENCE HAVE OCCURRED AT TEHRAN UNIVERSITY, ARYA MEHR UNIVERSITY AND AT TEHRAN'S PO ZECHNIC COLLEGE. SOME ROUGHING UP OF PROFESSORS AND FIGHTING AMONG STUDENT FACTIONS REPORTEDLY HAS OCCURRED AT AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AT KARAJ, A BRANCH OF TEHRAN UNIVERSITY. TEHRAN'S PO ZECHNIC COLLEGE

WAS CLOSED FOR TEN DAYS (SOME REPORTS SAY INDEFINITELY) BEGINNING DECEMBER 4 WHILE TWO COLLEGES OF TEHRAN UNIVERSITY ARE CLOSED. FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS ARE RUMORED FOR DECEMBER 7 WITH SECURITY AUTHORITIES REPORTEDLY READY TO DEAL HARSHLY WITH PARTICIPANTS. POLICE HAVE KEPT DEMONSTRATIONS WELL IN HAND AND NO MENTION OF DISSIDENCE HAS SO FAR APPEARED IN
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IRANIAN MEDIA.

2. TIMING OF CURRENT UNREST IS RELATED TO 16 AZAR 1341 (CORRESPONDING THIS YEAR TO DECEMBER 7) WHEN SECURITY FORCES WOUNDED MANY AND KILLED THREE STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS IN TEHRAN. BEGINNING ABOUT SEVEN YEARS AGO, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY IN TEHRAN, HAVE MARKED THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR DEATH WITH DEMONSTRATIONS. AS PICKED UP FROM SEVERAL SOURCES, STUDENT GRIEVANCES THIS YEAR INCLUDE (A) LACK OF INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL FREEDOMS IN IRAN; (B) CORRUPTION; (C) GROWING DISPARITY IN WEALTH IN IRAN; (D) HIGH STUDENT FEES; AND (E) GOI RESTRICTIONS ON SIZE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENT POPULATION. MIXED WITH THESE ARE MORE TRADITIONAL STUDENT GRIPEs OVER BAD CAFETERIA FOOD AND INADEQUATE PROFESSORS.

3. DR. AHMAD GHOREISHI, DEAN OF THE LAW SCHOOL AT IRANIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, WHICH THUS FAR HAS AVOIDED TROUBLE, TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS THIS YEAR MAY BE WORSE THAN THOSE IN PREVIOUS YEARS. GHOREISHI, WHOSE ESTABLISHMENT CREDENTIALS ARE IMPECCABLE, SEES LACK OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AS THE MOST BASIC STUDENT COMPLAINT. THE DILEMMA IN IRAN, IN HIS VIEW, IS THAT THE SITUATION WILL GRADUALLY WORSEN UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT RELAXES ITS CURRENT STRICT CONTROLS, WHILE IF IT DOES EASE RESTRICTIONS THERE IS RISK THAT THE SITUATION WILL GET OUT OF HAND, SUCH AS OCCURRED RECENTLY IN GREECE.

4. COMMENT: THERE SEEMS TO BE NO OCCASION FOR ANY IMMEDIATE CONCERN OVER THE CURRENT STUDENT DISSIDENCE. HOWEVER, WHAT IS HAPPENING REMINDS US THAT WITH ALL OF

ITS MANY SUCCESSES THE IRANIAN REGIME HAS CONTINUED TO FAIL TO WIN THE SYMPATHY OF ITS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.
END COMMENT.
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